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Volume 28

Number 8 *The Iowa Homemaker* vol.28, no.8

Article 5

1948

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Recommended Citation

Krenek, Peggy (1948) "It's Merrill-Palmer," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 28 : No. 8 , Article 5.

Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol28/iss8/5>

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Believe it or not
here's a school that
gives no tests, no grades



It's Merrill-Palmer

By Peggy Krenek

SCHOOL with no assignments, no tests, no grades—but a lot of work—that's Merrill-Palmer, report Marilyn Glasener and Nan Bernstein, home economics seniors. Last fall they were selected as Iowa State's representatives to attend Merrill-Palmer. Two students are chosen each quarter by members of the Division of Home Economics, to study at the school.

Merrill-Palmer in Detroit is no ordinary school. Child development in family life is the major course of study. Since its program is so specialized, Merrill-Palmer can't fulfill all the requirements for a college degree. Work taken by students is credited toward degrees at their own colleges. There are 43 colleges and universities from which students are selected. They affiliate with Merrill-Palmer through departments, psychology or home economics.

The Merrill-Palmer program has been developed experimentally. Its purpose is to give students an understanding of human growth and family life. The place of the home in social, economic and political spheres is stressed. Courses run parallel to each other and relate subject matter to everyday life. Merrill-Palmer serves as a laboratory where students may test and put new ideas to use.

With a staff of 55, the students are almost outnumbered. Last fall there were 26 senior women and 35 graduate students. Thus, the relationship between the staff and students is close.

An international atmosphere exists at Merrill-Palmer. Fall quarter there were students from China, Guatemala and India. In other years, many other countries have been represented. Prominent faculty

guests from England, Australia, Denmark, India and China stop at Merrill-Palmer to give talks and visit the school.

Each woman takes on the amount of work she feels she can do. The usual number of credit hours carried is 16-18 for the major, 3 hours for a minor and 5 hours of electives. When a student arrives at school, she looks over the opportunities offered and plans a program to fit her own interests. If she knows what she wants to learn, that's what she studies. If it isn't offered, all she has to do is ask for it.

Four staff members teach the major course. Students may choose their instructors. At midterm, a personal evaluation takes the place of grades.

The day's work begins at home. There are four houses maintained by the school where the students live. The women take turns planning meals, marketing, directing the cook and acting as hostess.

Mornings at Merrill-Palmer are free for laboratory and study. Not more than half of the mornings are spent in lab—and for study there is a choice of four fine libraries within two blocks. "There's a library at Merrill-Palmer that's the most complete one you've ever seen," Marilyn said when she returned this quarter. For assignments, students choose their own references.

Classes are from 1 to 4 in the afternoons. This may not seem like much school to you. But the Merrill-Palmer theory is that, as a student, you need time just to sit and absorb what you are learning—to form your own opinions. In class the teachers want to know what you think—not what you've read.

Most of the teachers are authorities in their field. Marilyn said it was not unusual to find them quoted in books she read as references. Dr. Amy L. Holloway,

of the few people who do play therapy, is among them.

More than 100 children from 5 to 18 years old come to the Club House at Merrill-Palmer each week after school for recreation. They are divided into five clubs which meet on different days of the week. Each club includes equal numbers of boys and girls. Students minoring in Recreation Clubs lead the groups.

Nursery School is the other minor open to undergraduates. The Nursery School at Merrill-Palmer provides a normal, happy life for 30 children from 2½ to 5 years old. It offers an educational program especially for parents. Careful records are kept over a long period. These records form the basis for studies in child development. All students observe and may take part in the nursery school. It serves as a demonstration of nursery school education to outside groups and visitors.

Play Groups

A play group for children from 1½ to 2½ years old was opened 2 years ago. It forms a second laboratory for staff and students to observe the needs of children at this age. Waiting lists are so long that parents sign up even before their children are born.

There are opportunities to work with children of all ages and backgrounds. A community group of adolescents from a neighboring district in Detroit meets once a week at Merrill-Palmer. Nan supervised the group of boys which came every Saturday morning. All but two were Negroes. There is a group of girls from the same district which meets on Monday evenings.

A center of summer fun is the Merrill-Palmer Camp. There are seven cabins by Brooks Lake, about

40 miles from Detroit. In the summer it is a training place for camp counselors. However, there is a caretaker in charge all year around. During the school year, club groups sometimes go out for a day or week-end. This is where the Merrill-Palmer family picnic takes place every year. The nursery school children, their parents and teachers all get together for a day at camp.

Summer Courses

A 6-week summer course in child development is offered to graduate students each summer. Emphasis is placed on the age period from 6 to 12, the age of children attending the Merrill-Palmer Camp. Students spend half their time in classes and study and half in work at the camp. They serve as assistants to the cabin counselors and help in the children's camp program.

The Merrill-Palmer Clinic was established at Children's Hospital in Detroit in 1931 to give service in child care and guidance to its clients. Children are brought to the clinic for such difficulties as retarded development, habit training, and unsatisfactory social, emotional, family, school or community adjustments.

Infant Lab

An infant laboratory is a part of the school's program for parent education. It is an advisory and educational service for women during the infancy of their children. The records are a link in the study of children from birth through adolescence.

Plans are now underway for a new project at Merrill-Palmer—an experimental kindergarten. If the experiment succeeds, the plans may be adopted by the Detroit public schools.

A student-teacher reads aloud to a fascinated nursery school audience.

